

GC16 - Council Concept Forums and Workshops

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Approved By: Council

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1. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear, structured and sound governance framework for the conduct of Council Concept Forums and Workshops.

The objectives of Concept Forums and Workshops are to:

1. Enable Councillors and officers to discuss early-stage ideas, concepts, strategies and initiatives in a less restrictive forum.
2. Foster strategic thinking, innovation and collaboration across current and future Council business.
3. Support informed, effective and transparent decision-making by ensuring matters are well developed prior to being presented to Council for determination.
4. Facilitate collaboration between Councillors and officers on matters of strategic significance.
5. Ensure that all discussions occur in a manner that is compliant with legislative, governance and probity requirements.

Concept Forums and Workshops are non-decision-making forums. All formal decisions must be made at an Ordinary or Special Council Meeting.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- The Shire President
- All Councillors
- The Chief Executive officer
- Executive Management
- All officers involved in the planning, presentation or attendance of Concept Forums and Workshops

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Concept Forum	A discussion forum for early-stage ideas, strategies or projects of strategic significance. Generally closed to the public and are not decision-making forums.
Workshop	A structured meeting allowing more detailed discussion, analysis and input on concepts, options or complex issues prior to Council consideration.

Term	Definition
	Generally closed to the public and are not decision-making forums.

4. Policy Statement

The Shire is committed to effective, transparent and well-informed governance.

Concept Forums and Workshops provide a structured environment for Councillors to:

- Receive information and briefings
- Ask questions and test assumptions
- Explore options and implications
- Provide strategic guidance on matters under development

These forums:

- Are not decision-making meetings
- Must not be used to indicate or test voting intentions
- Are generally closed to the public due to the preliminary and exploratory nature of discussions
- Must comply with the *Local Government Act 1995*, the Code of Conduct and conflict of interest requirements

5. Frequency

Concept Forums and/or Workshops will ordinarily be scheduled on a regular basis to support strategic governance, noting that:

- Forums are generally held on the second Thursday of each month
- No Concept Forum will be held in December
- No Concept Forum will be held in September or October in election years

Additional or alternative sessions may be scheduled as required by the Shire President or the CEO.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Shire President	May call meetings, preside over meetings, or nominate a Presiding Member.
CEO	May call meetings, approve presentations (in consultation with the Shire President), prepare agendas, ensure meeting notes are kept and distributed, and oversee compliance with this policy.
Councillors	Attend meetings, provide input and guidance, comply with conflict-of-interest requirements, refrain from indicating voting intentions and comply with the Code of Conduct.
Officers	Assist with planning, presentations, and attendance as required, and comply with the Code of Conduct.

7. Procedures / Implementation

7.1 Calling Meetings

- Concept Forums and Workshops may be called by the Shire President or the CEO.

7.2 Presentations

- Requests for presentations on matters of significance may be approved by the CEO in consultation with the Shire President.
- Presentations may be delivered by Shire officers or external consultants.

7.3 Agenda Preparation

- The CEO will prepare the agenda for each meeting.
- Agendas will reflect the informal nature of discussions.
- Each Agenda will allow 30 minutes at the start of the Forum or Workshop for Councillors to arise any issues or ask any questions relating to Shire business.
- At each concept forum or workshop Councillors may give notice of items for inclusion on a future agenda.
- The CEO will consult with the Shire President prior to finalising the agenda for each Concept Forum or Workshop.
- Late or last-minute agenda items will not be included unless the CEO in consultation with the President determines the matter to be urgent.

7.4 Notice of Meetings

- Councillors will receive at least five (7) days written notice.
- Shorter notice may be given in urgent or exceptional circumstances with approval from the Shire President.

7.5 Meeting Conduct

- The Shire President presides over meetings or nominates a Presiding Member.
- Councillors may ask questions and provide input consistent with the purpose of the meeting type.
- Debate and indications of voting intentions are not permitted.

7.6 Conflict of Interest

- Councillors and officers must comply with the Shire's Code of Conduct regarding conflicts of interest.

7.7 Records

- The CEO will ensure notes are kept, including date, attendance, and subject matters discussed.
- Notes of Concept Forums will be distributed to Councillors and published on the Councillor Portal.
- A summary of attendance and the issues discussed at each Concept Forum will be reported at the next available Council meeting.

7.8 Public Attendance

- Concept Forums and Workshops are generally closed to the public.
- Any exceptions require approval by the CEO in consultation with the Shire President, with advice of permitted public attendance provided 7 days in advance.

8. Legislative and Other References

- Local Government Act 1995
- Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes Standing Orders Local Law
- Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes Code of Conduct

9. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every three (3) years or sooner if legislative or organisational changes require. The CEO is responsible for monitoring compliance and initiating reviews.

9. Risk Management

The absence of structured Concept Forums and Workshops may result in:

- Reduced strategic discussion and innovation
- Poor collaboration between Council and officers
- Inefficient decision-making at Council meetings
- Increased governance and compliance risk